

Information Link

A Source of Information for Our Customers



Curtis L. Wolfe

Message From the CIO

Curtis L. Wolfe

For 2004, I have decided to write a column for the *Information Link* that addresses technology issues of importance. Obviously, the priority issues discussed will be those I believe are particularly important, but hope this column will be of interest to our entire readership.

As I reflect on 2003, the highlight has to be the focus of the legislature on Information Technology (IT) and the resulting budget cuts and directives continued in HB1505. It is apparent the legislature wants better accountability of IT expenditures and a focus on efficient and effective delivery of IT services.

While I believe state government is quite efficient in managing technology expenditures, it does not mean that we cannot do better, and we can certainly improve how we deliver the message to the legislature regarding technology expenditures required to support agencies' service delivery.

The Information Technology Department (ITD) started a number of activities in 2003 to address the concerns of the legislature. We initiated enterprise architecture in cooperation with state agencies to focus on the "future state" of technology to ensure IT budgets are spent wisely on those technologies that will bring value to the state for years to come.

We initiated several "enterprise" initiatives, such as ConnectND, Geographic Information System (GIS) and Criminal Justice Information Sharing (CJIS), that involve multiple agencies and organizations in the sharing of common information and services in a cost effective fashion.

Finally, we aspired to achieve the consolidation of select services as directed by the legislature. While this effort is not finished, we have made substantial progress in the implementation of consolidation and achieving the cost savings anticipated by the legislature.

Looking forward to 2004, there is certainly much more to accomplish. We must continue to support enterprise initiatives referenced earlier. For example, the initial implementation of ConnectND throughout state government and higher education is scheduled for late summer. This is certainly a large undertaking.

We must continue to mature the enterprise architecture model moving beyond technical ar-

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"We initiated enterprise architecture in cooperation with state agencies to focus on the "future state" of technology to ensure IT budgets are spent wisely on those technologies that will bring value to the state for years to come."

chitecture towards business and performance models as well. We need to complete the consolidation efforts and use enterprise architecture to examine how additional "utility" services can be offered for desktop standardization and support as referenced in the Pacific Technologies, Inc. (PTI) Study that was recently published.

We need to work with the State Information Technology Advisory Committee (SITAC) to approve IT policies and standards and to prioritize major IT projects for the 2005-2007 Governor's budget as well as for the next legislative session as directed in HB1505. In addition, we need to prepare IT strategic plans and prepare agency budgets for the 2005-2007 biennium.

The challenges for ITD will certainly continue in 2004. I know as an organization we are up to the challenges we will face. The biggest challenge of all will not be the projects and initiatives listed above but to continue to strive to deliver excellent service to our customers throughout government and education. Expansion of the help desk in the coming year will be part of this enhanced focus on customer service.

I will report on the progress of these initiatives in future issues of the *Information Link* and I hope this proves to be informative to all of you.

Best wishes for a prosperous year!

Information Technology Procurement

Pat Forster

ITD is responsible for reviewing and approving the acquisition of information technology by state agencies. The review process is structured to ensure that information technology being acquired conforms to state information technology standards and aligns with your agency's information technology plan. In addition, due to recent legislation in HB 1505, information technology procurements must also conform to the statutory requirement to use ITD delivered services for electronic mail, file and print server administration, database administration, application server, and hosting services. If an agency has a business need to procure information technology that does not align with state standards or statutory requirements, they can request an exception to the standard or policy by submitting a "Request For Exception to Information Technology Standards and Policies" form to the ITD Policy and Planning Division. This form is available online at <http://www.state.nd.us/itd/forms/sfn51687.pdf>.

An information technology procurement standard has been developed to provide agencies with the requirements and process to be followed for the procurement of information technology. The standard includes a requirement for standards verification and provides an opportunity for agencies to request design reviews within Enterprise Architecture to assist with that analysis. IT procurements that include competitive solicitations, such as Invitation For Bids (IFB) or Requests For Proposals (RFP) must be submitted to ITD Policy and Planning for review prior to issuing the solicitation. ITD will also review IT contracts for adherence to best practices and make recommendations for any changes to the contract based on best practices. RFP drafts and contracts related to IT procurement should be forwarded to Pat Forster in ITD Policy and Planning. The IT procurement standard has been reviewed and approved by the Enterprise Architecture Review Board and ITD management and is pending final approval by the State Information Technology Advisory Committee on January 12, 2004. Upon final approval, the standard will be available online at <http://www.state.nd.us/ea/standards/standards>.

Look for additional information related to IT procurement topics on the ITD Policy and Planning web site located at <http://www.state.nd.us/itd/planning/tech.html>. If you have questions on IT procurement topics or require technical assistance with an IT procurement that your agency is working on, please contact Pat Forster at 328-1992.

IT Planning and Budget Reporting

Nancy Walz

"North Dakota Century Code requires IT plans to be submitted to ITD by July 15, 2004."

Major changes in the reporting of IT budget and planning information are being implemented this year. The ITD Policy and Planning Division has been working with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and a small group of agency IT managers to identify the changes needed.

The changes are being driven by two factors. First, OMB is upgrading the budget system (SIBR) to a new version called the Budget and Reporting System (BARS). Second, ITD is eliminating the SilverStream development environment that supports the existing planning system (PlanIT). In addition, the implementation of PeopleSoft has the potential to change the way we report financial information.

Because of these changes, a simplified approach is being implemented. IT budget information will be entered into BARS along with a minimal amount of information about projects and workstation replacement cycles to support the budget request. The PlanIT system will be eliminated so there will be no electronic submission of other planning information. ITD will issue guidelines for agencies to follow to consistently communicate their technology direction. ITD will also be meeting with agencies to understand their environment and help them develop realistic plans aligned with the enterprise future state architecture and standards.

North Dakota Century Code requires IT plans to be submitted to ITD by July 15, 2004. Agencies should begin preliminary planning as early as possible in order to meet this deadline. The Policy and Planning Division will provide more information in the near future regarding information requirements and training opportunities.

Programming and Analyst Billing Description Changes

Vern Welder

Your November 2003 billing had some billing description changes. The "Programming" description is now "Developer" and the "Analyst" description is "Senior Developer."

This change allows customers to determine the level of skill you are paying for because developers in Programmer (P) and Programmer/Analyst I (P/A I) job descriptions will charge the Developer rate. Programmer/Analysts II (P/A II), Programmer/Analysts III (P/A III), and Senior Programmer Analysts (SPA) will charge the Senior Developer rate.

On the Job for ITD

Tim Paulson, an IT Business Consultant, has worked for the ITD Telecommunications Division for two-and-a-half years. His educational background includes a degree in electronics, and he is also a Cisco Netacad Instructor.



Tim consistently works with customers throughout all phases of the planning, design, development, and utilization of telecommunications network systems. "I enjoy helping customers achieve their technology goal," he said. Tim also provides consultative services to users to determine the needs for user training, product evaluation and testing, and addresses specific user problems related to telecommunications services.

Although his job at ITD and four children keep him busy, Tim enjoys helping out with youth sports, primarily wrestling and football, in his spare time.

IT Asset Management Implementation in ConnectND

Nancy Walz

"It is important that all agencies plan on populating the ConnectND asset repository with their IT asset data, since the ConnectND asset repository will be used to provide IT asset information for the statewide IT planning process as well as for population of the Strohl's LDRPS disaster recovery system."

As part of the rollout of the ConnectND Asset Management Module in 2004, the state plans to implement a statewide IT asset repository. As a component of the PeopleSoft Financials system, the primary purpose of the Asset Management Module is to replace the state's current fixed asset system. The ConnectND Asset Management project team has worked with the state's Enterprise Architecture organization to develop an enhanced implementation that will also support a statewide IT asset repository. The desire to create an IT asset repository stems from the need for a repository that can be leveraged in support of enterprise planning and initiatives. Current examples include the strategic IT planning process and the enterprise disaster recovery system initiative (Strohl's LDRPS implementation). It is important that all agencies plan on populating the ConnectND asset repository with their IT asset data, since the ConnectND asset repository will be used to provide IT asset information for the statewide IT planning process as well as for population of the Strohl's LDRPS disaster recovery system.

The Enterprise Architecture Review Board commissioned a study group to develop the requirements for establishing an IT repository within the ConnectND Asset Management system. This group included representatives from Department of Human Services, Department of Transportation, State Tax Department, Attorney General's Office, and the Information Technology Department. Through this study, Enterprise Architecture has approved a recommendation that includes additional data elements to be added to the ConnectND asset repository, profile definitions for IT assets, and asset classification for IT assets. This recommendation is available at: <http://www.state.nd.us/itd/planning/tech.html>.

The ConnectND project team is currently working on implementing the IT asset recommendations from Enterprise Architecture into the final configuration for the ConnectND Asset Management Module. A major part of that process will be the conversion and migration of data from current legacy asset repositories into the ConnectND repository. The primary legacy asset repository that will be migrated into ConnectND will be the OMB fixed asset system. Because of the limited number of IT asset **classes** in the OMB system compared to the asset **profiles** in ConnectND, there will be a need to expand IT asset classes in OMB and re-classify assets according to ConnectND profiles prior to conversion.

Within agencies, it is common to find IT asset repositories used in addition to the OMB system. While it is an objective that the ConnectND repository will replace many of these shadow systems, some agencies utilize IT asset management systems (auto-discovery, deployment, software metering, etc.) that provide functionality beyond the ConnectND system, so it is realized that there will be some data duplication. The goal with those types of systems is to have a standard import process to keep the statewide IT asset repository in ConnectND current.

It is also important to point out that the project team is configuring the IT asset repository capability with the appropriate design and security mechanisms to ensure the integrity of the financial fixed asset system. The goal is to restrict access to the fixed asset system for only the Finance staff, while providing the appropriate security mechanisms so that agency IT staff can update and report on IT asset information.

As the project team develops the conversion and import processes, we will be getting additional information out to the agencies. Current plans included having the conversion processes developed by December 31, 2003, so that agencies could develop plans for migrating their data. Production implementation is targeted for July 1, 2004. If there are questions, or if anyone would like to discuss this topic in more detail, please contact Pat Forster in ITD Policy and Planning at pforster@state.nd.us or 328-1992.

Lower Your Application Maintenance Costs

Vern Welder

"...pick a contractor whose methodology promotes low maintenance, commits users to spending adequate time on the development project, and Test, Test, Test."

Software owners are placing more emphasis on controlling software maintenance costs they incur after customized applications are implemented. Application development time is the best time to control on-going maintenance costs. Development methods, user/peer involvement, and adequate testing all contribute towards developing a solid, low maintenance application.

Object-oriented development methods promote the re-use of application code. Code re-use can be leveraged to create fewer points of failure within the application. And, there is less code to maintain. Changes done to a reused object will ripple through the entire application fixing a similar problem wherever it occurs. On the flip side, an error in a reused object can show up in many places too.

System users and the developer's peers provide valuable input to the development process. Users must make a commitment to attend meetings as required to provide design input and to validate the developer's work as tasks are completed. A common problem is that users cannot commit adequate time to development projects. Sometimes user commitment comes too late in the project, after their absence has already caused problems. Developers need to work with their peers to ensure that analysis and design specifications are solid and that code is efficient. Design and code walkthroughs are a good method of obtaining constructive peer feedback.

Nothing creates comfort at implementation time like a good acceptance test. A thoroughly tested application performs well and does what the user expected it to. Acceptance testing is a good time to include users that have not been involved in development. This provides a new perspective and helps ensure that the new design will work when it hits the floor.

To summarize: Pick a contractor whose methodology promotes low maintenance, commits users to spending adequate time on the development project, and Test, Test, Test.

Audio Conference Bridge

Dot Vetter

As of November 17, 2003, Information Technology Department (ITD) no longer provides audio conferencing services to North Dakota state agencies. North Dakota Interactive Video Network (NDIVN) in Grand Forks is now offering this service to state agencies. This change follows the national trend of combining voice, video, and web conferencing into one office.

The transition of all the "meet me" or unattended conference calls from ITD to NDIVN has taken place and was a very smooth transition. ITD completed all previously scheduled attended, or operator assisted, calls through December 2003. Currently, NDIVN is not offering operator assisted conference-calling services, but plans to make that service available in the future.

The rates charged by NDIVN are slightly higher than the rates previously charged by ITD; however, in performing a cost comparison between NDIVN and four of the leading conferencing services (LeaderPhone, AT&T, Qwest, and ConferenceCall.com), ITD found NDIVN's rates to be the lowest.

For more information on rates and scheduling, you may visit the NDIVN web site at www.ndivn.nodak.edu or contact June Piper at 701-777-6486.



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Information Link is published quarterly by the North Dakota Information Technology Department. Contact the editor if you are interested in contributing information or would like to be added to the e-mail distribution list.

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North Dakota GIS Day 2003

Bob Nutsch

Governor John Hoeven proclaimed November 19, 2003, as GIS Day in North Dakota. It was a successful event with over 120 registrants from state agencies, counties, cities, higher education, and private enterprise attending Geographic Information Services (GIS) exhibits, poster session, and presentations. Approximately 40% of the registrants were from state agencies, 18% from private enterprise, 16% from counties, 13% from higher education, 8% from federal agencies, and 4% from cities. The events were held in Bismarck at the North Dakota Heritage Center.

Presentations were made by Pro-West and Associates, Pembina County, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, ESRI, Houston Engineering, Cass County & City of Fargo, US Geological Survey, and the North Dakota State Historical Society.

Exhibits were presented by Agri ImaGIS, Pro-West and Associates, North Dakota State Water Commission, Houston Engineering, University of North Dakota, North Dakota State University, ESRI, Interstate Engineering, Kadrmas Lee and Jackson, Navigation Technology, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Frontier Precision, and Ulteig Engineers.

Posters were presented by North Dakota Department of Agriculture, North Dakota Health Department, North Dakota Geological Survey, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, North Dakota Parks and Recreation, North Dakota Department of Transportation, North Dakota Department of Commerce, and the North Dakota State Water Commission.

The North Dakota GIS Technical Committee (GISTC) developed and hosted the GIS Day event. The GISTC would like to thank the following groups for their help and assistance: The Information Technology Department for sponsoring the event and providing the networking, the North Dakota Heritage Center for the use of their wonderful facilities, the State Water Commission for providing the GIS Day posters, the Department of Commerce for supplying the GIS Day banner, and Central Duplicating for printing of the GIS Day announcements. The GISTC extends a special thanks to those who spent their valuable time preparing for the presentations, exhibits, and posters...and traveling to Bismarck to share their ideas with the GIS community. The GISTC wants to especially thank all of those who took time from their workload to attend the GIS Day events, in many cases traveling a long distance.

Please visit <http://www.state.nd.us/gis/news/gis-day-2003.html> for more information and to view additional pictures of the event.

We hope to see you next year for GIS Day 2004!

Consolidation Updates Located on Web

Developments regarding the IT Functional Consolidation efforts are updated regularly on ITD's website. Please visit <http://www.state.nd.us/itd/consolidation/news.html> to get the latest news. Additional articles will be published in future issues of the *Information Link*.

